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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: COUNTERTERRORISM, TALIBAN, BURMA, POPE,
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- [1](#)1. Lead Stories Summary

Editorials focused on President Obama's reversal on abuse photos, the budget draft for FY 2010, and the debate over Opel's future. The headlines in the press are dominated by the budget draft and the future of Opel. ZDF-TV's early evening newscast Heute and ARD-TV's early evening newscast Tagesschau opened with stories on the tax estimate and its implications on the budget.

- [1](#)2. Detainee Photos and Military Tribunals

Broadcast and online media picked up U.S. media reports that the President plans to resurrect military tribunals. Most newspapers carried lengthy reports and editorials on Obama's decision to prevent the publication of the detainee photos. It is remarkable to note that most commentaries express understanding for Obama's decision.

ARD-TV's Tagesschau reported this morning that, "according to media reports, President Obama is planning to announce today that the controversial military tribunals for terror suspects in Guantanamo will be resumed. CNN is referring to unnamed government representatives. Obama had suspended the proceeding until May 20. The rule of law will be applied in the future and statements made under torture may not longer be used."

Germany's most important webzine Spiegel Online said in its intro: "A new U-turn of the Obama government. The U.S. President wants indeed to resurrect the controversial military tribunals for Guantanamo detainees. However, stricter rules than during the time of Bush Jr. will be applied." The report continues: "This would be a withdrawal from one of his most important election promises."

Sueddeutsche editorialized: "There are serious reasons for Barack Obama's decision to try to prevent the publication of additional

photos showing American torture victims in Iraq and Afghanistan. Without any doubt, this would trigger a new spate of outrage over the United States. The anger over the mistreatment could ignite new attacks on U.S. soldiers who fight in both countries. Although he now holds back the photos because of this reason, Obama cannot get rid of the debate on torture.... First there was indecisiveness about the memos in which government lawyers justified torture, now we have the tug of war about the photos, and soon there is a dispute about the disastrous military tribunals for Guantanamo detainees. It will go on like this. Obama won't be able to finesse his way through. He must dare to make a painful step. The U.S. must clarify its position on the use of torture and mistreatment in the name of America."

Berliner Zeitung's editorial said: "Barack Obama is right. It would not clarify anything but add fuel to the hatred of America across the world if the government published the photos. We have known for six years that U.S. soldiers tortured in Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo..... Without the photos, Obama would not have won the election and have the chance to commit the country again to human rights. New torture photos would not be helpful in this attempt. However, those responsible for the torture should be taken to court."

Tagesspiegel remarked: "The photos, which would serve as an excuse for a flare-up of hatred, would not just pose a danger to U.S. soldiers. Above all, the Afghan people could not protect themselves against a new spate of violence. Particularly for them, the publication of the photos would come at a bad time."

Frankfurter Allgemeine commented: "President Obama favors pragmatic considerations over principles - and therefore bears the responsibility of his office. This will not be the last turn, particularly in the field of terrorism."

Die Welt opined: "By his refusal to publish the photos showing the mistreatment in Iraq and Afghanistan by U.S. soldiers, Obama made clear to Democrats and Republicans alike that they cannot ideologically trust him. Obama's supporters are outraged because he explains his change of mind by using a slogan from the Bush/Cheney era... But is his U-turn therefore wrong or a sign of weakness? It is particularly about his new strategy for Afghanistan. Obama cannot simply win the hearts and minds of the people by an additional 20,000 soldiers.... Obama needs more confidence if he wants to stop Afghanistan becoming his Vietnam."

Under the headline "Security over transparency," FT Deutschland commented: "The consequences of a potential new series of photos would not just have an impact on the Americans, but also its allies in Afghanistan, including the Bundeswehr. It is understandable that the idealistic supporters of Obama feel deceived. The most important thing about the change of power in Washington is not to criticize the evil methods of the Bush era, but to stop them for good."

13. Pakistani Fight against the Taliban

Under the headline "Pakistan at a turning point," Frankfurter Allgemeine commented: "Washington is aware of the fact that there are Pakistanis in the government and army who secretly approve of Jihad and do not want to do without Pakistan's 'religious army,' which played an important role in the Indian part of Kashmir in 1990s - and today in Afghanistan. The determination of the government and army will be seen in the tribal regions where the Taliban have their strongholds. So far, they are not taking any action there. The fact that the only Islamic nuclear state remains opaque and ambiguous also becomes clear in the outrage over the American drones, which bombard terror havens in the tribal regions week by week. Everybody who joins in the criticism knows that the Pakistani army provides the U.S. with the necessary information on the targets. It will take some time until we can trust Islamabad again."

14. Burma -- Aung San Suu Kyi Arrest

Many national dailies carried reports on Aung San Suu Kyi's arrest. Frankfurter Allgemeine headlined: "The One who Received an Unexpected Visit is Sitting in the 'Devil's Hole'" and reported: "An

American visited Nobel Peace laureate Aung San Suu Kyi without her having anything to do with it. Now the guest and the 'host' are in prison and Suu Kyi is faced with a five-year imprisonment. Her arrest is the most recent and most drastic measure with which the military regime is taking action against this icon of resistance." Financial Times Deutschland headlined: "Junta Arrests Opponent," and noted: "Aung San Suu Kyi is the most important opposition politician for the military junta that rules Burma with a tough hand."

Sueddeutsche wrote: "The new arrest and the accompanying mud-slinging campaign against this icon of the opposition seems to have been perfectly organized, because the house arrest against the 'Lady' should have ended in two weeks... Now the junta thinks it has found a sound reason to keep Suu in detention and to possibly transfer her from her house on the sea to the Insein prison."

Frankfurter Allgemeine noted: "It is hard to say from the outside whether the American who forced his way into Aung San Suu Kyi's house was 'apolitical,' but we can be sure that he came at the right moment for the generals. Again they have a pretext to put the woman of whom they are still afraid, on trial. And they are likely to have prefabricated the verdict, too. Then the regime can be sure that the situation will again remain calm. And as long as China is of the opinion that it is in its interest to have a 'stable' regime in Burma, western appeals will be in vain. Only if China had to fear of its reputation, would Aung San Suu Kyi have a chance."

Sueddeutsche Zeitung opined under the sub-headline: "Only a New Strategy, not a Blockade, Will Help Against the Military Junta in Burma " and judged: "As usual the junta in Burma is ignoring humanity, decency, and even its own laws because, in its pigheadedness, it does not tolerate anything that could threaten its rule, legitimized through the power of guns. In Burma, unteachable generals have turned a potentially wealthy country into a poorhouse with their tyranny. But the West must partly also be blamed for this situation. For a long time, the only thing that has come to its mind are sanctions to put pressure on the regime, even though it has been clear for a long time that they are useless. There are two reasons for this. India and China willingly stepped into the breach and undermined western sanctions. Second, isolation as a means of pressure will not help if a regime has isolated itself. But a new economic approach could offer political options. People who need not fear for their existence day by day and for whom the Internet and the mobile phone have become self-evident will be totally different factors once Burma's fate will be decided. The United States now has a man at its top, who is embarking on new paths. Why not also towards Burma?"

According to die tageszeitung, "the opposition will be further weakened by Aung San Suu Kyi's imprisonment but it will also increase the probability that the opposition NLD party will boycott the 2010 mock elections. It is the goal of this entire mock democratization process to keep influential neighbors such as China in a good mood and to permanently safeguard the power of the junta. The military want to demonstrate to its neighbors that they are able to implement reforms but not according to the 'Western' model. Since sanctions have thus far not been successful and since a policy of integration has failed, we must now also fear that the military will succeed with their policy and that the neighbors will not insist on Aung San Suu Kyi's release."

15. Papal Visit to the Mideast

Sueddeutsche editorialized: "In the Holy Land, Benedict particularly made progress in the dialogue with Islam. His Jordanian hosts, who demonstrated to all Islamophobic people in the West that there is a moderate, cooperative and tolerant Islam, were particularly helpful. The bold engagement in favor of the rights of the Palestinians will also improve the relations between Christians and Muslims. That is a success of this highly political pilgrimage. Not just the church will benefit from this. Benedict acted as a global holy leader in the interest of the world. His moves towards the Jews were less fortunate. Although he clearly condemned anti-Semitism and acknowledged the Second Vatican Council, which commits the church to the reconciliation with the Jews...Benedict's performance in Yad Vashem was quite a failure."

Tagesspiegel commented: "Benedict's leeway in the Holy Land was

smaller than the one his predecessor John Paul II enjoyed. Given the spectacular mistakes he had made in the past, his different personality and the extremely difficult situation in the Middle East, he has done the best job he could under the circumstances."

16. Israeli PM Netanyahu in Aqaba

Frankfurter Allgemeine headlined: "Abdullah Reiterated Two-State Solution," and reported: "With his visit to the Aqaba for a meeting with Jordan's king, Prime Minister Netanyahu is trying to improve relations with his Arab neighbor before going to meet President Obama on Monday. Netanyahu, however, avoided speaking of a Palestinian state."

"Jordan's King Accuses Netanyahu," is the headline in a report in Financial Times Deutschland. The paper reported: "During an unannounced visit of Israel's Premier Netanyahu, Jordan's King Abdullah strongly criticized Israel. He accused Israel of working step by step for the displacement of Christians and Muslims from Jerusalem. He called upon Israel to end the settlement activities in Eastern Jerusalem and in other occupied territories."

17. U.S.-German Efforts to Save Opel

In a front-page editorial, Financial Times Deutschland argued: "In the efforts to find a solution for Opel, it cannot be an option to keep Opel alive with state subsidies. This would be the preferred American solution, but for the German taxpayer it would result in the maximum risk. Against this background, the government's favored trusteeship model is still the best solution.... The Opel question can be resolved only if Washington and Berlin find a common approach. Since time is pressing, the issue must now become a top priority between Germany and the U.S. At the latest on May 20, when all those who are interested in Opel have signed up in Berlin, the facts will be on the table. Before GM files for bankruptcy, a decision on the highest political level is necessary. As of now, Opel is a matter for Obama and Merkel."

Frankfurter Allgemeine said in an editorial: "If Fiat or Magna International present an acceptable solution and a more or less binding offer to buy Opel, the German government wants a trustee to take over parts of Opel. Then it is likely that Opel will get a billion euro warranted loan. But this would be nothing but an ill-concealed state intervention and thus a CDU/CSU breach of promise. The chancellor had always ruled out any state intervention."

According to Sueddeutsche Zeitung, "Opel would be an ideal election campaign issue, and the SPD and the CDU/CSU could have distinguished themselves in a competition to save Opel. But Economics Minister zu Guttenberg fortunately wants to prevent such a development. Now the state is to take over Opel for a few months as a trustee. But this, too, is not a nice solution, because it is the state-owned, ramshackle regional banks that are now to give the company money beyond the upcoming Bundestag elections. It is now at least possible to decide very calmly about Opel's future. That future lies in Turin or Moscow, or if a buyer cannot be found, in Berlin."

In the view of Frankfurter Rundschau, "the government continues to mess around when it comes to saving Opel. Now it is up to a trustee to play a decisive role. But why a trustee? This has something to do with the dogmas of our economics minister zu Guttenberg. He wants to do everything to avoid the assistance for Opel looking like state intervention.... It is high time that the government stops messing around and addresses Opel's rescue as what it really is: a central issue for industry policy."

Handelsblatt opined: "If there is no conclusive concept on which politicians have a final say, then there is no trustee either. And we doubt that Opel would be able to survive a bankruptcy of its mother company General Motors in view of pressing liquidity problems. But at the last moment, the government seems to have straightened things out. The government, or a trustee who will be commissioned by it, will take over Opel for a certain period of time - if an investor is waiting at the door. The danger of a permanent trusteeship solution seems to have been banned."

Regional daily Westdeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung of Essen argued: "The idea of the economics minister to give Opel into the hands of a trustee is good and correct. What else should the government do? Watch idly as a U.S. insolvency administrator takes control? The talks with investors would become dramatically more difficult.... But one thing is clear: more than ever, the government now has a say with Opel. It will no longer be able to get rid of the political responsibility for a crash."

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